

## Small Lambs Have Big Advantage When Needles Are Seeking Targets

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MERTZON — Summer is taking over the Shortgrass scene. At many points the taint of dry weather is burning the grass to a flaxen hue. Lamb peddlers and buyers have been scurrying to the market centers; the highways are covered by big diesels roaring to the selling blocks.

Needle grass has been troublesome this marketing season. Early April rains brought up a bountiful crop of the spiny menace. Before it had even headed out, buyers were penciling out a schedule to discount infested carcasses. Without leaving their desks, dealers were able to build the needle scourge into a tragedy that would have made old Will Shakespeare think he had lost his touch.

Luck was with us in these parts. March was such a hard month that most of the lambs didn't get a good enough start to make much of a target for needle grass. Bobcats trimmed the percentage, too. Many a baby lamb was consumed before a stickery fate befelled him.

Then when it did look like the woolies were going to be turned into pin cushions the beggar lice weed began to cause such a buildup in the wool that needles couldn't penetrate the burrs. The forever fault-finding wool buyers howled about the burr fleeces, but if they'd taken off their aprons and made a bullet through the grasslands they'd have seen right off that one problem was offsetting the other.

For the first time, a human was wounded during the needle grass season. A kid at summer camp on the eastern boundary of the Shortgrass Country had to be taken to a doctor for removal of a spine he's swallowed. Camp officials haven't disclosed how the accident occurred. However, he was probably so carried away in filling his face that he failed to notice what he was eating. Boys that age are a lot like cowpunchers — a smart cook could slip a few leaves of burned prickly pear on the bread plate without their ever noticing the difference.

Anyhow, this spring should have taught a lot of hombres to stop cussing their luck when their lamb crop suffers from late winter blight. If they'll just watch along the highway going through this outfit they can readily see that the flyweight lambs simply don't collect needle grass the way the big ones do. Unless they're completely blind they'll see those pointed-on-both-ends knotheads are not kicking and biting and losing weight.

But ranch folks being like they are, there'll never be a day when top money and top odds won't be a popular combination. I know one thing for sure: Our freight bill to town is going to be cheaper than anyone else's in this country.